

## PART II

## Population

Where Washington's People Live

Because of the influences of topography, climate, accessibility and recent industrialization, Washington's population is distributed unevenly throughout the state. Over two-thirds of the people live in the western portion, concentrated largely in the industrial cities of Puget Sound. The Olympic Mountains and Willapa Hills of the Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains stand out as sparsely populated areas in western Washington. The Willamette-Puget Sound Lowland, extending from Vancouver on the Columbia River northward to Bellingham near the Canadian border, is the major population belt of the state. It contains a fairly well-distributed rural population on its river deltas and rolling, glacial drift plains.

The mountains, hills, plateaus, irrigable valleys and dry climatic conditions cause a generally clustered pattern of population settlement in eastern Washington. Mountainous areas including the eastern Cascade Mountain slope, the Okanogan Highlands, the Blue Mountains and the Selkirks have but few people. Dryland and upland areas which cannot be irrigated, such as large portions of the Waterville Plateau, the Channelled Scablands and the hills of Yakima County, are thinly settled. Both rural and urban population is concentrated in the irrigated Yakima, Kittitas, Wenatchee, Okanogan and Walla Walla Valleys and in the Pasco and Quincy Basins. In the far eastern section--the Palouse Hills--the uniform soil, topography and moderate rainfall permits a more evenly distributed population. The industrialized Spokane metropolitan area and the rich agricultural Yakima Valley are the major population clusters of eastern Washington.

Growth of Population

Washington was explored by Spanish, Russian, British and American expeditions between 1592 and 1805, but no settlement occurred until 1810. Ownership of the area was disputed by America and Great Britain. A compromise, the Joint Occupancy Treaty of 1818, permitted both American and British fur traders and settlers to live north of the Columbia River. British interests (the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company) established fur trading posts at Spokane and Walla Walla in 1810 and 1818. American claims were strengthened by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1805) and by the settlements at Fort Spokane, Okanogan and Astoria by the Pacific Fur Company. The British increased their influence as they established agricultural settlements at Fort Vancouver and Fort Nisqually between 1824 and 1833. Settlement by Americans north of the Columbia, although permitted by treaty, was discouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company which desired to maintain its fur trade monopoly.

A growing tide of American land settlers over the Oregon Trail during the 1840's changed the balance of control in favor of the United States. Most of the Americans settled in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Unhindered by the British, several hundred American settlers moved northward across the Columbia into the Puget Sound country and soon outnumbered the British fur traders.

The conflict of interests was solved by the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which gave the United States the present area of Washington and established the Canadian boundary as it exists today. Oregon Territory (including all of the present State of Washington) was created in 1848 by Congress, with its capital in Salem, Oregon. Settlers north of the Columbia met in 1851 at the Monticello Convention in present Longview, Washington, and asked for a separate territorial government. Washington Territory was created March 2, 1851, with a capital at Olympia on Puget Sound. Isaac I. Stevens was appointed as Governor.

Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow movement into the Puget Sound Basin. The Washington population was only 11,594 according to the 1860 Census.

In 1863, the Washington territorial boundaries were changed to the present state lines by the creation of Idaho Territory. The Census of 1870 was the first to follow the present boundaries, and it enumerated a population of 23,995.

Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1890. New transcontinental railroads brought large waves of immigrants from the East and Europe. The completion of the Union Pacific to the Columbia River brought new settlers into southeastern Washington. When the Northern Pacific reached Spokane in 1880 and was continued on toward Puget Sound, settlers occupied the Palouse and Big Bend wheat lands and the Yakima Valley. In 1883, six new counties were created in eastern Washington. Expansion of coastwise shipping and lumbering built up the cities on Puget Sound and at Grays Harbor. Washington Territory was admitted to the Union as a state in 1889. The population at that time was 350,000.

The period 1900-1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the state gained 624,000 persons, more than doubling to 1,141,990. Two other railroads, Great Northern and Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul, reached Puget Sound in 1893 and 1909, respectively. The lumber industry and agriculture supported more people; land and timber seekers homesteaded free public domain lands in the mountainous areas. The Alaskan gold rush doubled Seattle's population within a decade. Railroads and ships brought large numbers of people from Europe, who took up lumbering, fishing, mining and agriculture. Ranked numerically, according to the 1920 Census, the largest foreign-born groups in the state were Canadians (42,000), Swedes (35,000), Norwegians (34,000), English (23,000), Germans (22,000), Italians (18,000), Finns (12,500), Russians (11,000) and Irish (9,000).

Between 1910 and 1940 population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase was about 20,000 per year. The lumber industry began to decline after 1929. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in a slower rate of population growth. However, during the 1930's, many farmers from the Great Plains drought areas moved overland to Washington seeking farming opportunities.

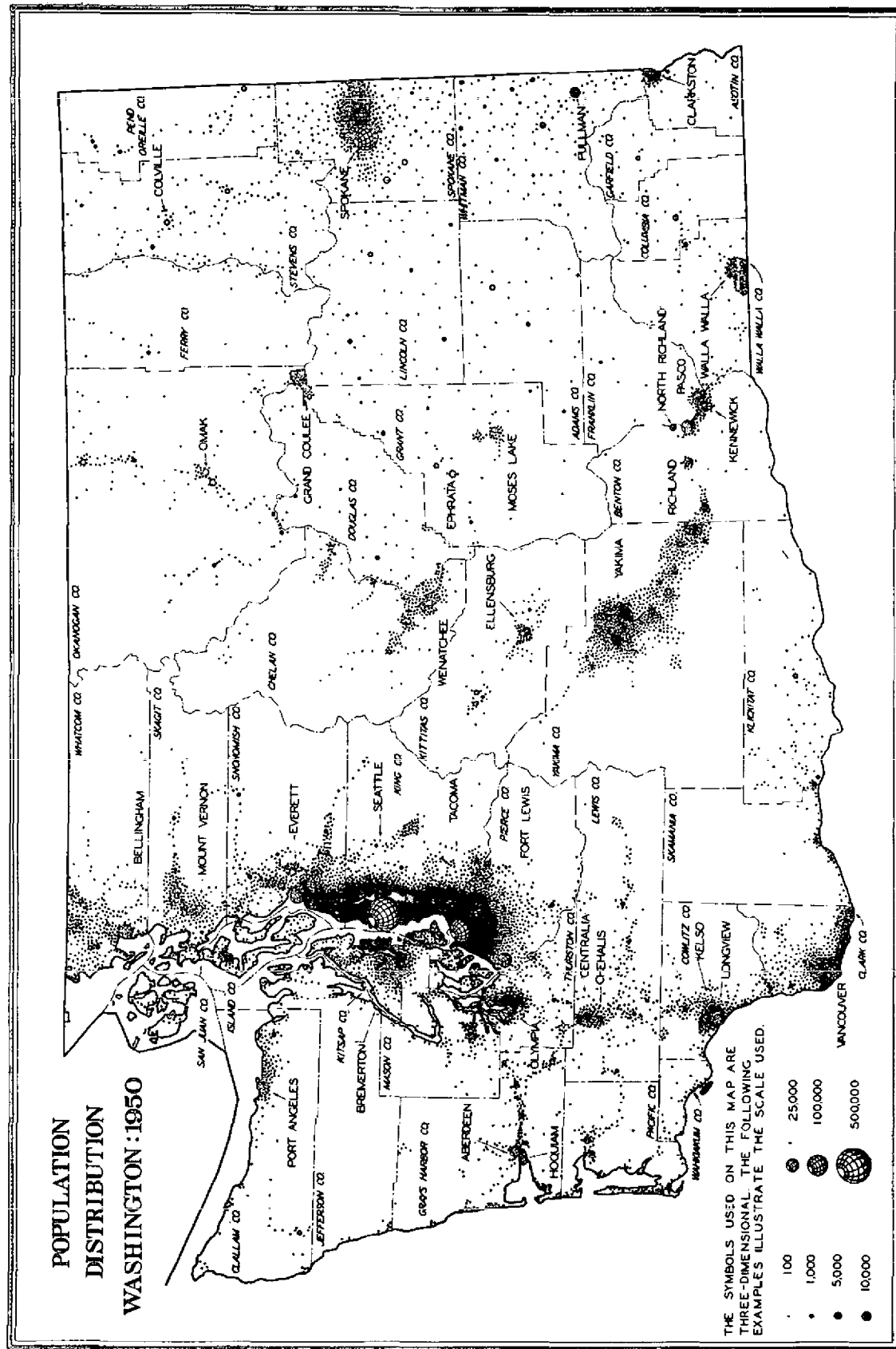
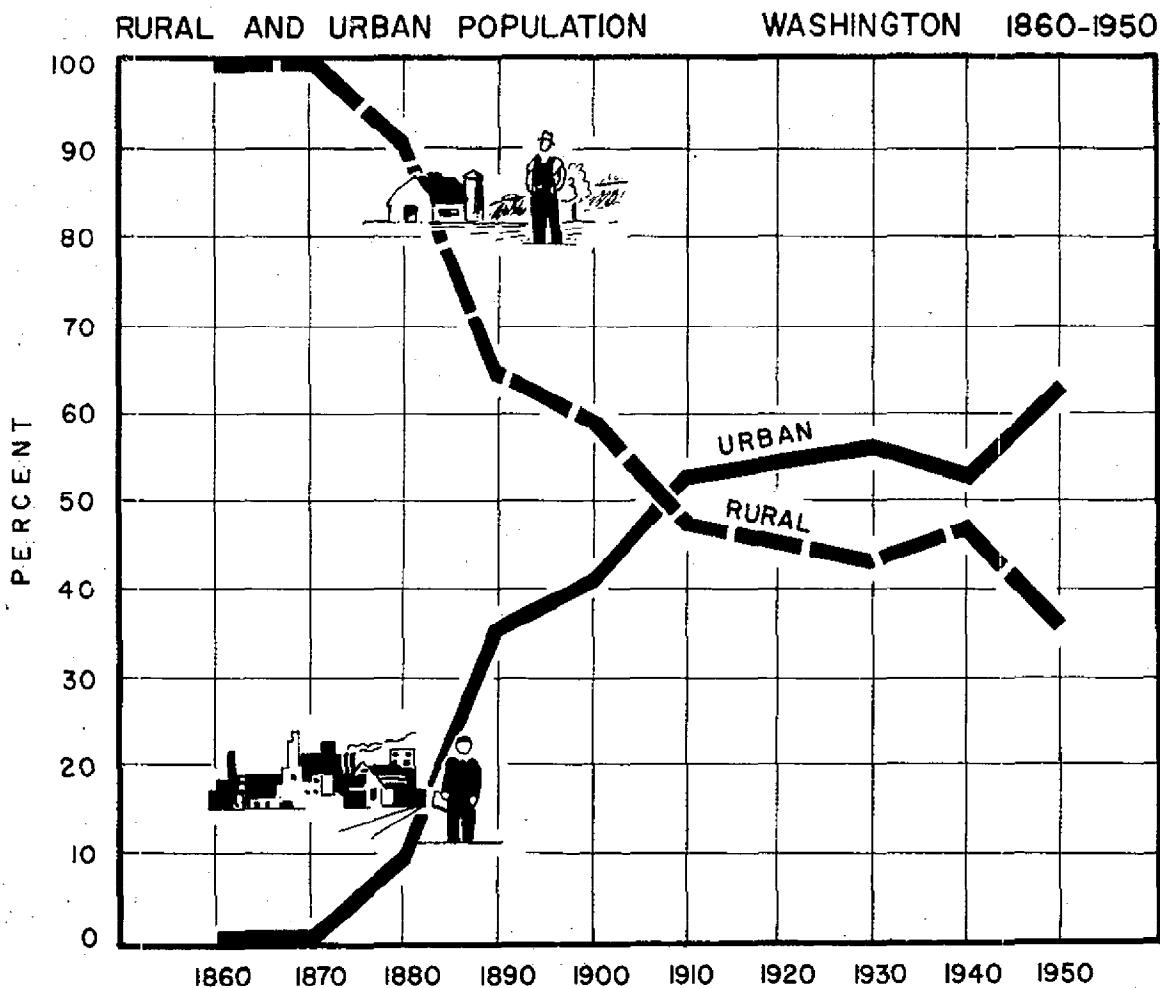
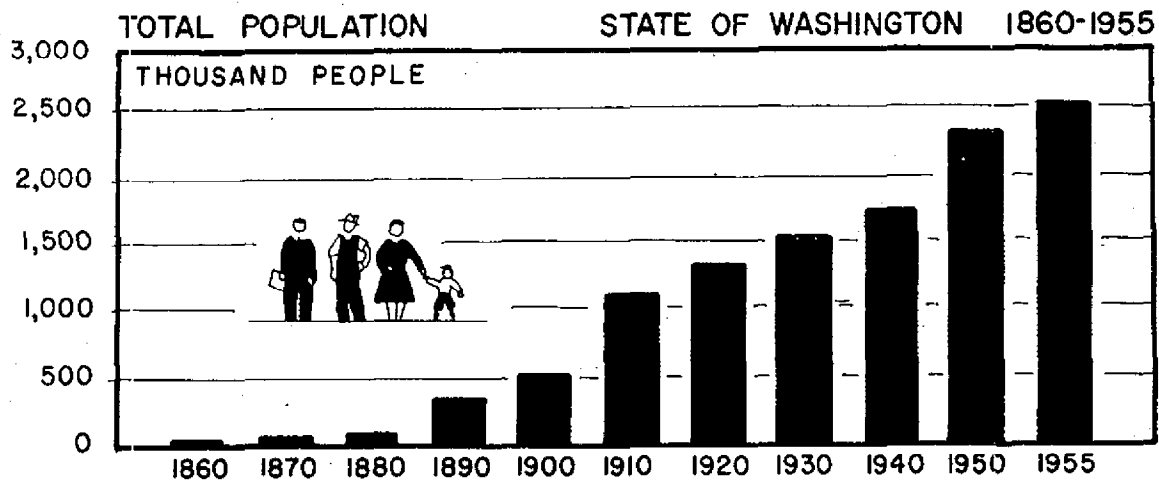


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



SOURCES OF DATA: U.S. Census 1860-1950; Washington State Census Board, Estimate - 1955.

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The 1940-1950 decade brought the greatest increase in Washington history. Primarily an overland movement of laborers to new defense industries, it resulted in an increase of 642,772 in ten years, raising the state population to 2,378,963 in 1950. Most of the new growth was in the industrial metropolitan districts in King, Pierce, Kitsap, Clark and Spokane Counties and at the Federal atomic works in Benton County.

### Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Washington was living in rural areas--in villages and on farms. By 1900, 211,477 of the population of Washington, or 40.8 percent, were living in urban areas. In 1950, according to the Census definition of "urban" which includes residents of towns of 2,500 and larger, 1,503,166 persons, or 63.2 percent, were living in urban areas. And over 52 percent lived in three standard metropolitan areas comprised of Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and their surrounding suburban cities and towns. This trend follows the national pattern.

Table 1.-- Population of Washington  
1860-1955

Year	Population
1860	11,594
1870	23,955
1880	75,116
1890	357,232
1900	518,103
1910	1,141,990
1920	1,356,621
1930	1,563,396
1940	1,736,191
1950	2,378,963
1955	2,580,000

Sources: U.S. Census, Population;  
Washington State Census  
Board, April 1, 1955  
Estimate.

The rural population is predominantly rural nonfarm, consisting of 602,026 persons who live in the country, but do not operate farms. The rural farm population decreased about one-fifth between 1940 and 1950, and numbered only 273,771 or 11.5 percent of the state's total 1950 population of 2,378,963. As a result of the farm-to-city trend in Washington, about one person in ten is living on a farm and about six persons out of ten are living in a town or city larger than 2,500.

According to the 1955 estimates of the Washington Census Board, the ten leading cities of Washington ranked as follows: Seattle (555,000), Spokane (182,000), Tacoma (156,000), Yakima (43,000), Vancouver (41,950),

Bellingham (35,700), Everett (43,100), Bremerton (32,200), Walla Walla (25,400) and Longview (23,500).

### Population of Columbia County

Most of Columbia County's population resides in the west central area of the county in the Tucannon and Touchet Valleys. In terms of persons per square mile it is quite sparse with an average of only about 5 persons per square mile. Southern Columbia County includes Umatilla National Forest in the Blue Mountains, a relatively uninhabited area. A majority of the population, over one-half, lives in Dayton. Rural farm population is mainly scattered on large farms raising grain and livestock. Columbia County's population of 4,700 ranked thirty-fifth among Washington counties in 1955.

Table 2.- Population of Columbia County  
1880-1955

Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1880	7,103	100	0
1890	6,709	100	0
1900	7,128	100	0
1910	7,042	100	0
1920	6,093	55.8	44.2
1930	5,325	52.5	47.5
1940	5,549	45.5	54.5
1950	4,860	38.6	61.4
1955	4,700	40.4	59.6

Source: U. S. Census, Population

Population is predominantly urban according to the classifications used by the Bureau of Census. Dayton is the only place classified as urban (an urban place is a city or town of 2,500 or over). The 1950 Census classified Columbia County's population of 4,860 as follows: urban 2,979 (61 percent), rural-farm 1,520 (31 percent) and rural-nonfarm (8 percent).

Population growth has been closely associated with agricultural development. The period from 1880 to 1900 was one of very rapid growth in Columbia County. (The population of what is now Columbia County was reduced considerably below the 1880 Census report by the creation of Garfield County in 1881 and Asotin County in 1883). Columbia County's growth followed the discovery that wheat could be grown on a successful commercial scale on the hills. The coming of the railroad which provided an economical means of transporting the grain to market was a second factor. Population declined after the peak number of 7,128 was reported in 1900. Considerable abandonment of dryland wheat farms occurred in the 1920's and 1930's. Drought, low wheat prices and movement of farm families to industrial cities all played a part in the downward trend from 7,100 in 1900 to 5,500 in 1940. Many smaller farms and homesteads were sold; farms became larger with fewer families farming. The introduction of commercial vegetables for processing in the 1930's, growth of a local canning industry and an increase in irrigation farming played some part in slowing the population decline since 1940. Consolidation of farms has now slowed considerably from the pace of former years. The Washington State Census Board estimated the county's population as 4,700 in 1957.

There are two incorporated towns in Columbia County--Dayton and Starbuck. They contain 3,170 or over two-thirds of the county's inhabitants. Numerous wheat and livestock farm operators live in the towns and commute to their properties during the crop planting and harvesting season. Dayton is the county seat and is located in the center of the wheat and pea growing region. Dayton grew steadily up until about 1940 when its peak population of 3,026 was reported. The town was first an agricultural trade center and shipping point and in more recent years has also become a processing center for the vegetables grown in the surrounding area. Dayton has almost two-thirds of Columbia County's population. Starbuck had a population of 1,500 at its peak. The town was the site of the division shops of the Oregon Railroad and Navigation

Company. The introduction of a locomotive which was able to negotiate this section of the line without helpers led to the eventual closing of the shops in 1932. Starbuck's population declined from 760 in 1910 to 176 in 1957. Today the town is an agricultural trade center.

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places  
Columbia County, 1910-1957

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1957 <sup>1/</sup>
Dayton	2,389	2,695	2,528	3,026	2,979	2,995
Starbuck	761	524	346	251	194	176

<sup>1/</sup> Populations for 1957 are estimates of the Washington State Census Board.

Sources: U. S. Census, Population.  
Washington State Census Board.

Typical of many counties of the western United States, Columbia County has been a melting pot of immigrants from many foreign lands. Free homesteads, low-priced and productive land attracted many immigrants from agricultural regions of the midwestern United States and Canada and Europe. Near the end

Table 4.- Foreign-Born White Population, Columbia County  
1890, 1920 and 1950

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	32	26	4
Scotland.....	14	4	4
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	--
Ireland (Eire).....	51	13	1
Norway.....	12	14	4
Sweden.....	17	19	4
Denmark.....	20	29	20
Netherlands.....	--	1	1
Switzerland.....	12	5	--
France.....	6	6	2
Germany.....	86	42	10
Poland.....	3	4	1
Czechoslovakia.....	--	--	--
Austria.....	5	9	1
Yugoslavia.....	--	1	--
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	--	4	1
Finland.....	--	--	--
Italy.....	--	5	1
Canada-French.....	--	2	1
Canada-Other.....	131	56	36
All other countries...	51	20	16
Totals	440	260	107
Percent foreign-born..	6.5	4.3	2.2

Source: U. S. Census, Population

of the pioneer settlement period in 1890, nearly 7 percent of the population was foreign born. This figure is lower than for many of the wheat counties but is similar to those of Garfield and Asotin Counties. Both the number and percentage of Columbia County's population that were foreign born declined after 1890. The largest immigrant groups were from Canada and Germany.

Agriculture is by far the leading field of employment in Columbia County. In 1950, about 37 percent of all wage earners and self-employed persons worked in agriculture. The second major type of employment was in miscellaneous services and third was work in retail and wholesale trade. Manufacturing was fourth in importance with about one-eighth of the work force. Occupations of minor importance included construction, transportation and county, state and federal government positions. The county's economy is highly specialized around commercial crop agriculture and the processing and handling of peas, wheat and barley.

Table 5.- Employment of the Population  
Columbia County, 1950

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	1,394	355	1,749	100.0
Agriculture.....	618	26	644	36.8
Forestry and fisheries.....	4	--	4	.2
Mining.....	2	--	2	.1
Construction.....	103	3	106	6.1
Manufacturing.....	163	41	204	11.7
Transportation.....	45	3	48	2.7
Retail and wholesale stores....	188	87	275	15.7
Miscellaneous services.....	165	158	323	18.6
Public administration (govern- ment employment).....	50	14	64	3.6
Other employment.....	56	23	79	4.5

Source: U. S. Census, Population